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General

Lebanon is located in the Middle East bordered on the N and E by Syria, and on the S by Israel.

The climate is Mediterranean with mild to cool, wet winters and hot, dry summers. The mountains of Lebanon experience heavy winter snows.

The coast of Lebanon is varied, alternating between sandy bays and rocky headlands.

A narrow coastal plain is backed by Jabal Lubnan (Lebanon Mountains). The fertile valley of Al Biqa (Bekaa) lies between Jabal Lubnan and the ranges of the Anti-Lebanon and Jabal Ash Shaykh (Mount Hermon).

Buoyage System

The IALA Buoyage System (Region A) is in effect. See Chart No. 1 for further IALA Buoyage System information.

Currency

The official unit of currency is the Lebanese pound, consisting of 100 piasters.

Firing Areas

A hill, from which firing practice takes place, is located 1.5 miles SSE of Ras Beirut Light. The axis of the firing range, oriented 288°, is dangerous up to 2.5 miles from shore.

During firing practice a yellow flag is hoisted in the vicinity of the hill.

Government

Lebanon is a parliamentary republic comprised of five governorates. It is governed by a President, who is elected by the legislature (Chamber of Deputies), a Prime Minister, and a Cabinet appointed by the President. The capital is Beirut.

Holidays

The following holidays are observed:

Jan. 1, New Year's Day; Feb. 9, St. Maron; Good Friday (Catholic and Orthodox); May 1, Labor Day; Aug. 15, Assumption Day; Nov. 22, Independence Day; and Dec. 25, Christmas Day.

The following Moslem holidays, the dates of which vary from year to year and are subject to the appearance of the moon, are observed: Al Fiter; Al Adha; Moslem New Year's Day; Achoura; and Prophet's Birthday.

Industries

The major industries are banking, food processing, textiles, cement, chemicals, jewelry, metal fabricating and oil refining.

There is an oil refinery at Tripoli, which refines oil brought by sea from Iraq, and a refinery at Sidon, which refines oil brought from Saudi Arabia by pipeline.

Languages

The official languages are Arabic and French. Armenian and English are also spoken.

Prohibited Areas

The S coastal area of Lebanon, between 33°06'N and 33°15'N, is restricted to navigation within 3 miles offshore.

Vessels should remain 6.5 miles to seaward of the line joining Sidon and Khaldi, just S of Beirut.

Regulations

The Lebanese authorities require that all Lebanese and foreign merchant vessels calling at Lebanese ports must advise the port of Beirut and the ports of destination 24 hours prior to arrival.

Navigation is prohibited within the territorial waters of Lebanon and Israel between the parallels of 33°05.72'N and 33°15.00'N.

Vessels must approach Beirut by the recognized sea lanes where they will be subject to control by the maritime and customs authorities before continuing to the legal ports of destination.

The legal and commercial ports are Beirut (Bayrut), Tarabulus (Tripoli), Juniye (Jounieh), Sidon and Sur (Sour) with the addition of certain private and specialized ports of Shikka Atigah and Selaata.

Any commercial vessels found outside these sea lanes or visiting ports other than the legal ports will be formally banned and severely penalized.

The recognized sea lanes for the ports of Beirut, Tarabulus, Sayde (Sidon), and Sour (Sur) are established, as follows:

1. Entry should be executed by navigating on a course of 090° within a lane not exceeding 3 miles opposite the relevant port.
2. Exit should be executed by navigating on a course of 270° within a lane not exceeding 3 miles opposite the relevant port.

Passage between the above ports should be effected within Lebanese territorial waters at a distance of between 3 and 12 miles off the coast.

Ports are open to traffic during the following periods:

1. Beirut—24 hours.
2. Tarabulus—between 0500 and 2400.
3. Sayde and Sour—between 0500 and 2000.

Passage between the above ports is limited to between 0500 and 2000.

All vessels should call Oscar Charlie (Military Operations Control) during daylight hours on VHF channel 11 or 16 and request permission to enter Lebanese territorial waters, stating vessel's name, flag, persons on board and their nationalities, and departure point, as follows:

1. Inbound Vessels.
 - a. Initial contact established 12 miles from port of destination.
 - b. Second contact 6 miles from port of destination.
 - c. Third contact on arrival at anchorage off port of destination.
 - d. Fourth contact upon arrival at the quay.
2. Outbound Vessels.
 - a. Initial contact on leaving harbor.
 - b. Second contact 6 miles from port of departure.
 - c. Third contact 12 miles from port of departure.

Normal international courtesies, such as flying the Lebanese flag at the foremast, should be carefully adhered to by vessels while in the waters and ports of Lebanon. U.S. Navy ships will comply with U.S. Navy Regulations and/or appropriate instructions.

Time Zone

The Time Zone description is BRAVO (-2).

U.S. Embassy

The U.S. Embassy is situated at Antelias Beirut. The mailing address is P.O. Box 70-840, Beirut; PSC 815, Box 2; FPO AE 09836-0002.